

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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Creators: Dumble, Wilson R.

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THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE



Mr. Deeds Goes To Town

Mr. Deeds, yes, Mr. Longfellow Deeds, has been in town. Rather, Mr. Deeds goes to town with the able help of Frank Capra and Robert Riskin. You see, it happened this way. Mr. Riskin wrote a story and called it "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town." Mr. Capra directs it after it had been put in screen form, and Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur help out the scheme of the above mentioned gentlemen to a great degree. In case you missed the cinema at the Palace several weeks ago, you must put it on your MUST list of movies, for it is without a doubt one of the best of the season.

The story is slight. Mr. Longfellow Deeds of Mandrake Falls, Vt., writes greeting-day verses and limericks and Edgar Guestian verses with the same facility that he plays the tuba in the town band. Then, one day, he receives notice that he has inherited a \$20,000,000 estate from an uncle; so, he proceeds to Manhattan and its scheming ways. Crooked lawyers, girl reporters and pompous opera divas get on his trail and in his hair. Crushed, derided, deceived and disillusioned, he plans a share-the-wealth scheme by establishing a collective farm colony for the down-and-out, with the result that he is hailed into the lunacy court where he is almost judged a maniacal depressive.

You must not miss Mr. Deeds. You must see him struggling with the tuba, and you must witness the lunacy commission's hearing which is as perfect a spoof of alienists and expert testimony as the screen has ever presented. As I said before, Mr. Deeds must be on your MUST list of movies.

A Study in Style

Style, we have always been told, is that illusive quality of personality that an author injects into his writing. No less a person than Thomas Huxley, for example, once remarked that it was "the business of a young writer to make his style himself."

All of that is very clear indeed to an instructor of English, but for that same instructor to put over the idea to a class of young college students is a horse of another color. I know of no better way to try to explain style than to quote the following passages taken from *THE MAYFLOWER'S LOG*, a monthly magazine privately published and distributed by the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C. The author of these sketches is not named, but whoever he is, he has done a splendid job imitating the style of a few favorite writers of today.

The situation dealt with is slight; it might be summed up in the words, "boy meets girl." The point of the articles, however, is not the situation, but the manner or the style in which the various authors handle the situation. Figure it out for yourself; I believe that when you finish reading them you will realize that there is a difference in the style of writing of various authors.

First, here is the way that Emily Post would handle the scene:

Lack of correct breeding is so evident from the very first. Culture and breeding are inborn in one, just as one's accent and one's mannerisms are products of nature and environment. Whenever a crowd of young people gather, at a country club, for instance, one can single out those who are polite, those who are acquainted with the little niceties which make life more enjoyable.

Therefore, to we oldsters, seated around the wall of the charming country club in Long Island, it was clear, as we watched Dorothy Ward Childress and Gary Benton—his mother was one of the Philadelphia Wimples—acknowledge their introductions, that here were two members of the younger generation who, although they might say "swell" and "hot-cha," they knew WHEN to say it. So important, I know you will agree.

Many admiring glances followed them as they strolled through the French windows of the ballroom. At that moment, a signal was given signifying the opening of the buffet—lovely with spotless damask, beautiful silverware and crystal gleaming in the soft candlelight.

This is what Jim Tully would say about the same situation:

An innocent bewitching devil. Gary felt the blood pounding in his head. He couldn't think straight. His hand reached toward the pocket of the car. A bottle of whiskey was there. Perhaps this would help them both.

"Have a drink, Dot?" he said, his hand searching for her in the dark. She took a swallow, coughed. Oh, oh, she was inexperienced, plenty inexperienced. Gary took a long drink, felt better as it coursed through his veins.

She was sweet. But, hell, she was just another girl. He automatically stepped on the starter and the car roared away, barely missing several couples walking down the road. Dorothy took another gulp from the bottle. The air inside the car was hot and full of the perfume she was wearing. The red lights of the Black Kat roadhouse loomed up ahead. Inside, a band was playing, hot and loud.

And Harold Bell Wright:

"Dorothy—I may call you that, may I not, Miss Childress?" said Gary. "Dorothy, I wonder if you would care for something to eat?"

Dorothy, blissfully unaware of her surroundings, murmured no. They continued to dance, to the lilting music, while onlookers observed them and smiled, a bit, as if remembering the first flush of their youth, and their first love and the wonderful dreams it brought them, for nothing is as delightful as young love.

Gary spoke, his deep voice ringing in Dorothy's ears. The music was a soft background to his speech. "Dorothy. Dorothy, dear, you will let me see you again, won't you?"

Dorothy nodded, not daring to speak. "And now," she said, sweetly, "I must go home."

Slowly they left the ballroom, their hands clinging together.

Here is our old friend, Miss Gertrude Stein:

Jazz, jazz, jazz, whirling round again, again, white shoulders, black coats, white shoulders, no grass grass, no green grass and white doves. Black coats, black ties, black shoes, coats, ties, shoes, shoes, ties, coats. To dance, to dance all night, moonlight, night, jazz, dance to moonlight, to night, to jazz. White shoulders, black coats, together apart, apart together. Jazz.

Now, for Walter Winchell:

Gary (baking-powder shekel man) Benton and Dorothy Childress, who is one of Manhattan's prettiest dolls, seemed to like automobiling better than the Long Island country club last night . . . It was Love at First Sight . . . She tells her friends she is going to lure him away from the giggle-water and the Long Island kountry klubbers . . . We'll bet they'll phfft before another month, though . . . Mama Benton is veddy social and a po' working gal has no place on Long Island . . . Inside dope has it that they were glimpsed dancing at a nearby hot-spot . . . He took her home and left her at the door . . . the sap!

And now William Saroyan:

He could feel her presence, even though he didn't look in her direction. She is Life, he thought, she is life to imbue me with life. They walked on in the darkness and the moonlight shone down.

This is life, thought Gary, a beautiful girl, soft music, everything clean and good, good. Nothing that is ugly or wretched or sad belongs here. He could not help noticing her bare shoulder as the moon shone down. How life seemed soft and milky and yet firm underneath.

There were no complexities for them, then. No hint of the world's pettiness, its silly troubles. For one heaven-sent moment, they were above that. Happiness.

Slowly, they climbed into the automobile. The darkness enveloped them, as with a magic blanket of gloom.

Last but not least, caustic Dorothy Parker:

And so they were married. And so they were divorced. Happy ending.

The Value of Leisure Reading

In this day of radio, cinema and automobile, when people have entertainment brought to them merely by sitting in their comfortable chair at home or behind the steering wheel of their car, reading has become a lost art. It is so easy to turn on the dial to the radio, to go to the neighborhood motion picture house or to climb into the front seat of the motor car for a ride, that the average person follows lines of least resistance and believes he is gaining perfect relaxation. Little does he realize that often times greater relaxation and recreation are gained by the reading of a good book.

Of course it must be admitted that average motion picture and radio programs do not tax one's intelligence. Greater concentration is needed, no doubt, in reading than in seeing a picture or listening to a radio presentation. Naturally, this does not apply to all pictures nor to all air programs, but for the most part it is safe to say that many presentations of each do not require great mental exertion.

Besides the momentary recreation that it gives, reading also acts as a pleasant relief from the leveling influences of society. The average person little realizes the sheer joy in sailing the seas with Joseph Conrad, the mental stimulation of walking into a Victorian drawing-room with Oscar Wilde, the thrilling and heart breaking adventures of Charles Dickens, the greatness of the mind of Leonardo da Vinci as an inventor as well as an artist. It is difficult for the average person to understand that his emotions may be the very same as those of Robert Browning or Elizabeth Barrett. He will be deeply pleased, secretly no doubt, that his pleasures experienced at the state fair back home are the same pleasures as those of the characters in Phil Stong's *STATE FAIR*. Then, it is, that he will understand that human nature is much the same the world over and that he can personally identify himself with certain characters. The tragedy of old age, does not belong alone to Shakespeare's *KING LEAR*; old age comes to every one, is universal; that fact in itself should sharpen the reader's interest.

Reading, furthermore, not only furnishes the desired recreation but also stimulates mental growth, a growth, most naturally that cannot be recognized over night, or even in a months time, but a growth that accumulates little by little over the passing of years. It creates a background that is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of living and to the success with one's fellow beings, regardless of walk of life.

With the purposes of recreation and relief and mental stimulation, the value of leisure reading is found. It will be remembered that during the Middle Ages the church and the tavern were the popular means of escape from life and from one's self. But in this twentieth century with libraries and bookstores almost as plentiful as gasoline filling stations, more time should be devoted to the printed page of novels and biographies, dramas and poetry, essays and short stories.

Suggested List for Summer Reading

Modern Plays

I. BRITISH AND AMERICAN

Anderson, Maxwell: Queen Elizabeth; Valley Forge; Saturday's Children; Mary of Scotland; Winterset
 Anderson, Maxwell and Stallings, Laurence: What Price Glory?
 Akins, Zoe: The Old Maid; Declasse
 Barrie, James M.: Quality Street; Dear Brutus; What Every Woman Knows; The Admirable Crichton
 Bessier, Rudolph: The Barretts of Wimpole Street
 Brighouse, Harold: Hobson's Choice
 Connelly, Marc: The Green Pastures; The Wisdom Tooth
 Coward, Noel: Cavalcade; Design for Living; Private Lives
 Drinkwater, John: Abraham Lincoln; Marie Stuart; Robert E. Lee
 Fitch, Clyde: The Climbers; The Truth; The Girl with the Green Eyes
 Galsworthy, John: Strife; Justice; Escape; The Silver Box; Loyalties
 Green, Paul: The House of Connelly; In Abraham's Bosom
 Heyward, Du Bose: Brass Ankle
 Kingsley, Sidney: Men in White
 Maugham, W. S.: Rain; The Circle; The Letter; Our Betters; The Constant Wife
 O'Neill, Eugene: Strange Interlude; Mourning Becomes Electra; Days Without End; Anna Christie; The Hairy Ape; Dynamo; Beyond the Horizon; Ah Wilderness; The Emperor Jones; Marco Millions; The Straw
 Shaw, George B.: Man and Superman; The Doctor's Dilemma; Pygmalion; Arms and the Man; Candida
 Sheriff, R. C.: Journey's End
 Walter, Eugene: The Easiest Way
 Wilde, Oscar: Lady Windermere's Fan; The Importance of Being Earnest

II. CONTINENTAL

Andreyev, Leonid: He Who Gets Slapped
 Capek, Karel: R. U. R.
 Ibsen, Henrik: A Doll's House; Rosmersholm; Ghosts; Hedda Gabler; The Wild Duck; An Enemy to the People
 Maeterlinck, Maurice: Pelleas and Melisande
 Molnar, Ferenc: Liliom; The Swan; The Guardsman
 Pirandello, Luigi: Right You Are!; Six Characters in Search of an Author
 Rostand, Edmond: L'Aiglon; Cyrano de Bergerac; The Romancers
 Schnitzler, Arthur: Anatol; Light o' Love
 Strindberg, August: The Father; The Dance of Death; There Are Crimes and Crimes

Longer Fiction

I. MODERN BRITISH AND AMERICAN NOVELS

Allen, Hervey: Anthony Adverse
 Anderson, Sherwood: Winesburg, Ohio
 Buck, Pearl: The Good Earth
 Cather, Willa S.: My Antonia; O Pioneers!; A Lost Lady; Death Comes for the Archbishop; Shadows on the Rock; Alexander's Bridge; Song of the Lark; The Professor's House; One of Ours
 Dreiser, Theodore: An American Tragedy; Sister Carrie
 Ferber, Edna: So Big; Show Boat
 Galsworthy, John: The Forsyte Saga; The Modern Comedy
 Garland, Hamlin: A Son of the Middle Border
 Hemingway, Ernest: A Farewell to Arms
 Lewis, Sinclair: Main Street, Babbitt; Arrowsmith; Dodsworth
 Locke, William J.: The Beloved Vagabond
 Maugham, W. S.: Of Human Bondage; The Moon and Sixpence
 Sabatini, Rafael: Scaramouche; The Sea Hawk
 Stong, Phil: State Fair
 Tarkington, Booth: Alice Adams; The Magnificent Ambersons; The Turmoil
 Walpole, Hugh: The Cathedral; Fortitude; Vanessa; Jeremy
 Wells, H. G.: The War in the Air; The Time Machine; Mr. Britling Sees It Through; Tono Bungay; The Dark Forest

II. MODERN CONTINENTAL NOVELS

Blasco-Ibanez, V.: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
 Hamsun, Knut: Growth of the Soil
 Remarque, Eric: All Quiet on the Western Front
 Zweig, Arnold: The Case of Sergeant Grischka
 III. 19TH CENTURY BRITISH AND AMERICAN NOVELS
 Blackmore, R. D.: Lorna Doone
 Butler, Samuel: Erewhon; The Way of all Flesh
 Collins, Wilkie: The Moonstone; The Woman in White
 Melville, Herman: Moby Dick
 Reade, Charles: The Cloister and the Hearth
 Stevenson, R. L.: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
 Thackeray, William M.: Vanity Fair

IV. 19TH CENTURY CONTINENTAL NOVELS

Dumas, Alexandre: The Count of Monte Cristo; The Three Musketeers
 Hugo, Victor: Les Miserables; Notre Dame de Paris
 Verne, Jules: 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
 Tolstoi, Leo: Anna Karenina; War and Peace
 Turgeniev, Ivan: Fathers and Sons
 Zola, Emile: Nana